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Approved For Release 2009/09/18 : CIA-RDP87M00539R002203530022-0

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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

06 NOV 1985

OLL 85-3096/2

The Honorable Henry J. Hyde
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Hyde:

I read with interest the Allan Goodman article entitled "Keeping Secrets" that you forwarded in your letter of 7 October. I agree with Mr. Goodman that improvements are needed in clearance procedures to minimize the chance that untrustworthy individuals get access to vital secrets. While most of the steps needed in this area are administrative in nature, there is one legislative initiative now being considered by a House/Senate Conference Committee on the FY86 Intelligence Authorization Bill that I believe is important to this effort. This legislative initiative would allow the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Department of Defense (DOD), and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) access to criminal history information from state and local authorities while conducting background investigations. I have urged the Conference Committee to adopt this provision which is contained in the Senate version of the Intelligence Authorization Bill. I hope to have your support on it as well.

There are other administrative steps that must be taken to improve the overall security situation. Mr. Goodman is correct in saying that too many people hold clearances and that the number must be reduced to those with a demonstrated need for access to classified information. Effecting these reductions, however, is extremely difficult to do properly. A "meat cleaver" approach; i.e., arbitrarily cutting by a certain percentage, tends to produce confusion and other undesirable consequences. Instead, a careful and diagnostic approach is called for under which the need-to-know of each clearance holder is carefully weighed and the clearances quickly removed where only marginally justified. At the same time, other initiatives must ensure that information is classified only where necessary to national security. Thus, the twin problems of clearance proliferation and excessive use of classification must be attacked simultaneously and in ways more vigorous and effective than in the past. I am dedicated to the pursuit of these objectives.

DCI
EXEC
REG

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Mr. Goodman is also correct in his belief that there are not enough investigators working on the investigative requirements of the Executive Branch. More investigators are needed to keep up with the initial requests for clearances to do the work in a timely and cost-effective way, and to do the equally important reinvestigations needed periodically to revalidate clearances and detect the cleared persons who, over time, have become a security risk.

As to investigative techniques and question formats, the field clearly needs imagination and multiple perspectives. Asking the right questions is the goal. Both security issues, i.e., loyalty, character, trustworthiness, honesty, and suitability issues such as drug use, alcohol use, emotional stability etc., must be covered in order to get the job done. I believe that the Intelligence Community's security directors are all pursuing such comprehensive coverage in their investigative pursuits, but it may be that lack of experience by certain young investigators is undermining the effort. On the chance that this is the case, I will soon be asking my Security Committee, consisting of senior security officials in the Intelligence Community, to study the matter and to see if additional training is needed.

In the CIA, the background investigation is supplemented by a polygraph examination which focuses on the relevant security and suitability issues with the best source of information available to the applicant or candidate for a clearance. This examination produces a reliable profile of an individual and provides data that no investigation, however comprehensive and skillfully done, could ever deliver. Any legislative limitations on the responsible use of the polygraph by the Intelligence Community would significantly weaken security screening procedures. I hope that you will join me in opposing such legislation.

Finally, I am concerned about the possible weakness of the current procedures used generally to produce "Secret" clearances. It may be that additional steps should be taken beyond a national agency check to provide the basis for access to the massive array of sensitive data carried in "Secret" documents. I am planning an Intelligence Committee review of this issue.

The above steps are illustrative of the efforts currently underway to improve personnel security procedures. I believe we know what the problems are and, given time and resources, can deal with them effectively without the formation of a Presidential Commission such as suggested in the Goodman article.

I look forward to working with you in strengthening our security posture.

Sincerely,

/s/ William J. Casey

William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence

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LEG/OLL: (29 Oct 1985)

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Remarks

TO #13: Please prepare appropriate response
for DCI signature.

Executive Secretary

10 Oct 85

Date

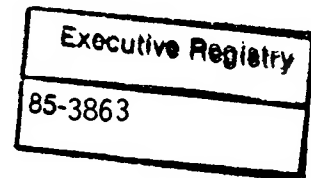
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HENRY J. HYDE
8TH DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

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Congress of the United States
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Washington, D.C. 20515

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October 7, 1985

The Honorable William J. Casey
Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Bill:

The enclosed article provided a lot to think about and worry over. Would any legislation help? Perhaps your legal department has some ideas.

Cordially,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "H. Hyde".

Henry J. Hyde
Member of Congress

HJH:nsm
Enclosure

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Allan E. Goodman

Keeping Secrets

8-15-85
Post

"The current system almost guarantees that investigators won't have time to ferret out spy rings."

"Professor, this won't take even five minutes of your time."

Thus begins most of the U.S. government background information interviews I have given over the past several years on graduating students who have been accepted for federal employment. Since about half of Georgetown's graduates go into the public sector, federal investigators are numerous and frequent visitors to our campus.

Many of these interviews are worthless. The overworked investigator clearly is anxious to move on to the next case—and frequently complains about an impossible workload. The questions appear designed only to discover if the student has demonstrated unstable behavior with respect to the use of drugs or alcohol. The questions are asked in a way that invites non-medical professors to render medical judgments, and this is something that most professors refrain from doing. If a student had the potential to damage U.S. interests the way the Walkers allegedly have, I doubt the current system would uncover it.

Moreover, in my five years as director of Georgetown's School of Foreign

Service graduate program, rarely have I been asked to render judgments about subjects on which I am competent. For example, I never have been asked about a student's integrity—whether he or she has ever been found guilty of academic dishonesty. I never have been asked whether the student never has been asked to describe a student's academic strengths and weaknesses.

Most interviews end with what investigators call the catch-all question: "Would you recommend this student for a position of trust and responsibility with the U.S. government?" The question virtually requires an affirmative response unless the student has been found guilty of academic dishonesty or has acknowledged personal problems that would impair his ability to hold a federal government job. In an age when students have the right to see the contents of their security investigation files—a right that I strongly support—we professors have an obligation to respond narrowly to such catch-all questions. Whether or not we like a student or whether we have heard via the student grapevine

that he or she was drunk at a party should not enter into an answer. Thus, the government's apparent purpose in using the "catch-all question"—to fish for derogatory information—is defeated.

Unless this background investigation is changed fundamentally, it will not detect likely problems or warn of potential threats. And by swamping the system with more than a quarter million requests annually for routine background checks of the kind I have described, the current system almost guarantees that investigators won't have the time to ferret out spy rings by conducting enough periodic follow-up investigations of those with access to sensitive national security information.

The recently announced plan by Secretary of the Navy John Lehman to reduce the number of people with access to classified information and to centralize control over the process by which clearances are granted is, in principle, a sensible interim response to a crisis. But how this plan can be executed by a mere 900 naval security investigators with a caseload of more than a million personnel has yet to be explained. And similar plans have not

even been announced to cover Army and Air Force personnel or defense industry employees, who in the past have proven to be equally lucrative targets for KGB recruiters.

Perhaps the worst damage the Walker case has wrought is the revelation that the government's security clearance process is outmoded, understaffed and ineffective. But this is not a new story. The system has been found at fault repeatedly by congressional investigations. Just a month before the Walkers were arrested, the Senate held hearings on federal government security clearance programs that revealed, according to Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), that "the government is already plainly incapable of adequately investigating and reinvestigating all persons seeking security clearances."

Unfortunately, there are no quick, easy or cheap ways to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of this process. So far, the government is going about doing so by administering Band-Aids. Priority should be placed on reducing the number of secrets, for example, as well as the number of people with access to them so the one can

be better protected and the other more thoroughly screened. The problem should be attacked on a government-wide basis, not agency by agency; uniform standards and control procedures should be developed and applied stringently to defense industry contractors as well.

What these issues require is the creativity and expertise of a high-level, bipartisan presidential commission. Protecting our secrets in a better way is now too important a job to be left to already overworked—if not demoralized—offices of security in a dozen agencies. A presidential commission could ease the pain of changing old ways and help infuse the arcane business of security investigations with new ideas. And since the cost of a new security system likely is to be high, the president will need the Democratic as well as Republican political and business leaders who might serve on such a commission to help persuade Congress to foot the bill.

The writer, associate dean of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, served as presidential briefing coordinator for the Central Intelligence Agency.

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